

ST FURSEY'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND PARISH,  
ST. FURSEY'S ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PARISH CHURCH.  
YARMOUTH ROAD, STALHAM. NR12 9PG.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMME.  
MARCH 2021



**T**ODAY is the fountainhead of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery which was from eternity. The Son of God becometh the Virgin's Son, and Gabriel proclaimeth the good tidings of grace; for this cause, we also cry to the Mother of God with him; Rejoice, thou who art full of grace; the Lord is with thee.

BRITISH ORTHODOX SAINTS  
COMMEMORATED IN  
MARCH.

( See selected lives of Saints on another page.)

- 01 Swithbert the Elder, Bishop of the Frisians  
02 Chad, Bishop of Lichfield  
Cynibil, Confessor  
04 Owen of Lichfield, Hermit  
06 Baldred and Billfrith, Hermits  
Cyneburgh and Cyneswith, Abbesses of Castor and Tibba,  
Anchoress  
07 Easterwine, Abbot of Wearmouth  
08 Felix, Bishop of Dunwich  
09 Bosa, Bishop of York  
12 Alphege the Elder, Bishop of Winchester  
Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome and Apostle of the English  
13 Gerald of Mayo, Abbot  
16 Aristobulus the Holy Apostle, Bishop of Britain  
17 Withburgh of Dereham, Virgin  
18 Edward the Martyr, King of England  
Egbert of Ripon, Confessor  
19 Almund, Martyr  
20 Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne and Wonderworker of Britain  
Herbert of Derwentwater, Hermit  
23 Ethilwald of Farne, Hermit  
24 Hildelith, Abbess of Barking  
25 Alfwold, Bishop of Sherborne  
27 Alkeld, Martyr in Yorkshire  
30 Osburgh, Abbess of Coventry

TROPARION OF ST. FURSEY.

Establishing thy monastery in a Roman fortress  
thou didst teach men that the Orthodox Faith is  
a true bastion against the onslaughts of every evil  
force O Father Fursey.

Where fore pray to God for us that we may all be  
bastions of the Faith standing firm against the rising  
tide of falsehood that our souls may be saved.



ST FURSEY'S CHURCH COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

SERVICES IN MARCH 2021

(In the Parish Church unless otherwise stated)

Sat Mar 6 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday of Meatfare. Saturday of Souls. Vespers 4pm.
Sun Mar 7 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday of Meatfare ( <i>last day for meat</i> ). Sunday of the Last Judgement Commemoration of St Theodore the Recruit. Divine Liturgy 10am.
Sat Mar 13 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday of Cheesefare ( <i>All Monks &amp; Nuns</i> ). Vespers 4pm.
Sun Mar 14 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday of Cheesefare ( <i>St Benedict</i> ). The Expulsion of Adam from Paradise. Divine Liturgy 10am. Vespers of Forgiveness 11:45 Apprx.
Mon Mar 15 <sup>th</sup>	First Week of Great Lent. ( <i>Vegan Fast</i> ). (3 <sup>rd</sup> Hour 9am with Reading from Fathers).
Mon March 15 <sup>th</sup> continued ...	Vespers 4pm with Reading from Genesis & Isiah. Compline 7pm Great Canon of St Andrew. ( <i>This is our pattern of daily worship during the first week of Lent at St Fursey's Chapel</i> ).
Sat Mar 20 <sup>th</sup>	First Saturday of Great Lent. (St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne 687), Vespers 4pm.
Sun Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>	First Sunday of Great Lent. Sunday of Orthodoxy. Divine Liturgy 10am.

Wed Mar 24 <sup>th</sup>	Forefeast of the Annunciation. Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts 7pm.
Thur Mar 25 <sup>th</sup>	Annunciation to The Theotokos. Divine Liturgy 10am.
Sat Mar 27 <sup>th</sup>	Second Saturday of Great Lent. Saturday of Souls. Vespers 4pm.
Sun Mar 28 <sup>th</sup>	Second Sunday of Great Lent. St Gregory Palamas. Divine Liturgy 10am.
NB:	All the above services will be at the Parish Church unless otherwise stated. Confessions at any time by appointment.

#### Daily Services at St Fursey's Chapel

These continue to be 3<sup>rd</sup> Hour at 9am with a reading from the Fathers. Vespers 4pm. During Lent the weekday services have a more penitential character with the use of the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian printed below for use at home.

#### Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian

##### O Lord and Master of My Life

Grant not to me a spirit of laziness, despondency, lust of power, or of gossiping (*prostration*).

Yea O Lord and King, Grant that I may see my own errors and transgressions and not to judge my brothers and sisters, for blessed art thou unto the ages of ages. Amen (*prostration*).

O God cleanse me a Sinner. (12 times with the sign of the cross and a bow each time and then the whole prayer is repeated with a final prostration).

## COMMUNITY NEWS AND NOTICES

### Our Observance of Great Lent

During Great Lent Orthodox Christians try to follow a vegan diet (no animal products like meat, fish, milk, eggs or cheese) but this can be difficult in our missionary situation for lone Orthodox in a non-Orthodox family or at work. Do the best prayerfully but avoid red meat. The principle behind the fast is to uphold the fact that we are in charge of our bodies rather than our bodies in charge of us. Fasting assists our prayer and it goes back to Our Lord.

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### Our Parish and the COVID-19 Lockdown

As I write this newsletter on February 15<sup>th</sup>, I can report that we were able to resume the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy yesterday, February 14<sup>th</sup> with the blessing of the Metropolitan Silouan but behind locked doors with only one or two people attending. So, I was grateful to Anne who did the singing. I keep in touch with members of the community by telephone and all being well, we will be able to stream the Liturgy soon, so that members of the community can see the Liturgy at home. It goes without saying that everyone is prayed for individually every day. God willing it will not be too long before we can be together again at the Liturgy, as the family of God.

### BLESSINGS TO OUR READERS

Father Stephen

## ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

## Small Vespers

On Lord, I have cried, *four stichera are sung:*

## TONE FOUR

Taking pity upon that which He has made and bending down in His tender mercy, the Maker hastens to dwell in the womb of a Maiden, the Child of God. To her the great Archangel came, saying to her: 'Hail, O thou who art full of divine grace, our God is now with thee.' Be not afraid of me, the chief commander of the armies of the King. For thou hast found the grace that thy mother Eve once lost; and thou shalt conceive and bring forth Him who is one in essence with the Father.' (*twice*).

Mary said to the Angel: 'Strange is thy speech and strange thine appearance, strange thy sayings and thy disclosures. I am a Maid who knows not wedlock, lead me not astray. Thou sayest that I shall conceive Him who remains uncircumscribed: and how shall my womb contain Him whom the wide spaces of the heavens cannot contain?' 'O Virgin, let the tent of Abraham that once contained God teach thee: for it prefigured thy womb, which now receives the God-head.'

Glory be to the Father . . . Both now . . .

## TONE ONE

(*by Byzas*)

In the sixth month the chief of the angelic hosts was sent to thee, pure Virgin, to declare unto thee the word of salvation and to greet thee, saying: 'Hail, thou who art full of grace: and to greet thee, saying: 'Hail, thou who art full of grace: and to greet thee, saying: 'Hail, thou who art full of grace: the Lord is with thee. Thou shalt bring forth a Son, begotten before the ages from the Father, and He shall save His people from their sins.'

From a letter by Saint Leo the Great, pope

[Epist. 28 ad Flavianum, 3-4: PL 54, 763-767]

## THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S RECONCILIATION WITH GOD

Lowliness is assured by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our sinful state, a nature that is incapable of suffering was joined to one that could suffer. Thus, in keeping with the healing that we needed, one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, was able to die in one nature, and unable to die in the other.

He who is true God was therefore born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in his own nature, whole in ours. By our nature we mean what the Creator had fashioned in us from the beginning, and took to himself in order to restore it.

For in the Savior there was no trace of what the deceiver introduced and man, being misled, allowed to enter. It does not follow that because he submitted to sharing in our human weakness he therefore shared in our sins.

He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing his divinity. He emptied himself; though invisible he made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things he chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence. So he who in the nature of God had created man, became in the nature of a servant, man himself.

Thus the Son of God enters this lowly world. He comes down from the throne of heaven, yet does not separate himself from the Father's glory. He is born in a new condition, by a new birth.

He was born in a new condition, for, invisible in his own nature, he became visible in ours. Beyond our grasp, he chose to come within our grasp. Existing before time began, he began to exist at a moment in time. Lord of the universe, he hid his infinite glory and took the nature of a servant. Incapable of suffering as God, he did not refuse to be a man, capable of suffering. Immortal, he chose to be subject to the laws of death.

He who is true God is also true man. There is no falsehood in this unity as long as the lowliness of man and the preeminence of God coexist in mutual relationship.

As God does not change by his condescension, so man is not swallowed up by being exalted. Each nature exercises its own activity, in communion with the other. The Word does what is proper to the Word, the flesh fulfills what is proper to the flesh.

One nature is resplendent with miracles, the other falls victim to injuries. As the Word does not lose equality with the Father's glory, so the flesh does not leave behind the nature of our race.

## SELECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS.

**BOSA**, bishop of York 678-86 and 691-703. This monk of Whitby was consecrated by \*Theodore bishop of Deira (the southern half of Northumbria, roughly the equivalent of modern Yorkshire) when \*Wilfrid had been expelled from Northumbria following his quarrels with King Egfrith. Bosa ruled his diocese until his death, except for the years of Wilfrid's restoration. \*Bede praised his 'singular merit and holiness'; one of his disciples was \*Acca, later the follower and successor of Wilfrid at Hexham. Feast: 9 March.

Bede, *H.E.*, iv, 12; v, 19-20.

**EOSTERWINE** (650-86), abbot of Wearmouth. Of noble birth, he joined the service of Egfrith, king of Northumbria, and fought in his army. At the age of twenty-four he became a monk at Wearmouth, the monastery just founded by his cousin \*Benedict Biscop. Here he followed all the regular observance, taking his full share in the manual tasks. He milked the cows and the sheep, he worked in bakehouse, garden, and kitchen, he shared in the harvesting and winnowing. In 679 he was ordained priest and in 682 he was appointed abbot by Biscop to rule during his own absence. As abbot, he was kind and accessible to all, just as he had been before his promotion. He had the same food and sleeping accommodation as the rest of his community and joined in the manual work. He died at the early age of thirty-six, on 6 March, while the community were at Matins. He was buried by the church-door, but his relics, with those of Benedict Biscop and \*Sigfrid, were translated by \*Ceolfrith to a shrine close to the high altar. His cult was mainly local but his name also occurs in the OE martyrology from Mercia. Feast: 7 March.

C. Plummer (ed.), *Bede's Opera Historica* (1936), I, 364-404; II, 353-77; J. F. Webb and D. H. Farmer, *The Age of Bede* (1982).

**ALKELDA** (1) (Aethilda) (d. c.800). She was patron of the church of Middleham (Yorkshire), also of Giggleswick (West Riding). Edward IV's patent survives which enabled his brother Richard (subsequently Richard III) to set up the college of Middleham in honour of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Alkeld. Local tradition claimed that she was a Saxon princess (presumably a nun), who was strangled to death by Viking women and buried in the church at Middleham. Feast: 28 (27) March.

R. Challoner, *Memorials of Ancient British History* (1717), v, 51-52, n. 135.

**WITHBURGA** (1) (Witburh) (d. c.742), virgin. The youngest daughter of Anna, king of East Anglia and a sister of \*Etheldreda, she lived as a solitary at Holkham (Norfolk), and later at East Dereham, where she is reputed to have founded a community and to have died before the buildings were completed. She was buried in the churchyard, but after fifty years her body was exhumed, found incorrupt and enshrined in the church.

In 974 Brithnoth, abbot of Ely, stole the body under the pretext that she would have wanted to be buried near her sisters. A band of his monks accompanied by soldiers went secretly by night to Dereham, having obtained the approval of King Edgar and \*Ethelwold. They removed the body to their wagons, drove twenty miles to the river Brandon, on which they continued their journey by boat to the dismay of the men of Dereham, who had pursued them by land and could only watch helplessly while their treasure slipped away. The body was reburied at Ely where, however, the incorruption story was never exploited, as it might have detracted from Etheldreda's glory. In 1102 Withburga's relics were moved into the new part of the church; in 1106 they were joined by the bones of the other three Ely saints (Etheldreda, \*Sexburga, and \*Ermeigild). The church at Holkham is dedicated to her; water in Withburga's well at Dereham churchyard was reputed to have sprung up when her body was first exhumed. Withburga's emblem in art, as on six Norfolk screens, is a tame doe, which William of Malmesbury described as her companion in solitude who provided her with milk. Feast: 17 March; translation 8 July.

**ALFWOLD** (d. 1058), monk of Winchester and bishop of Sherborne. William of Malmesbury recorded the following details, derived from a priest of his diocese who knew him. He was noted for his habitual abstinence at a time when self-indulgence was said to be general; he used at table common wooden platters and bowls. He was specially devoted to \*Swithun, whose image he set up in the church at Sherborne, and to \*Cuthbert, whose shrine he used to visit and whose antiphon he would often repeat. He quarrelled at least once with Godwin earl of Wessex, who was smitten with sudden illness and recovered only at the saint's pardon. After his death, the sees of Sherborne and Ramsbury, both poorly endowed, were reunited and in 1070 became the see of Salisbury. Feast: 25 March.

## Blessed Mourning

**"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."** (Matthew 5:4) This is the second beatitude, and it logically follows the first. If one is poor in spirit, liberated from the spiritual and physical lusts of this world, he will necessarily mourn and weep over the conditions of man.

The poor in spirit know how foolish and sad it is to be caught by sin, to be victimized by falsehood and evil, to be wedded to destruction and death. Viewing the realities of this world without God, the world captivated by its own vain imaginations, the world thinking itself rich and prosperous and needing nothing but in fact **"wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked"** (Revelation 3:17), the spiritually poor man can only mourn. Knowing what could be from God, and what is actually with God, he will mourn and weep like the prophets over sinful Israel, like Jesus over the corpse of Lazarus and the city of Jerusalem, (John 11:35, Matthew 23:37) like Jesus Himself in the garden, confronted by His own cup of suffering which was so senseless and cruel.

Blessed mourning for sin is essential to the spiritual life. But in the victory of Christ, it is not morbid or joyless. On the contrary, it is filled with hope, with gladness and with light.

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you . . . (2 Corinthians 7:9-11)

In his writings, Saint John Climacus (7th c.) follows this teaching of Saint Paul. It is the classical teaching of the Christian spiritual tradition. The end of blessed mourning is not despondency or remorse, it is repent-

ance and salvation. It is the "mourning which causes joy."

**Mourning, according to God, is sadness of soul and the disposition of a sorrowing heart which ever madly seeks for that which it thirsts . . .**

**Mourning is a golden spur in a soul which is stripped of all attachment and all ties . . .**

**Keep a firm hold of the blessed joy-grief of holy mourning and do not stop working at it until it raises you high above the things of this world and presents you pure to Christ.**

**The fruit of morbid mourning is vain glory and self-esteem, but the fruit of blessed mourning is comfort.**

**He who is clothed in blessed and grace-given mourning . . . knows the spiritual laughter of the soul.**

**My friends, God does not ask or desire that man should mourn from sorrow of heart, but rather out of love for Him he should rejoice with spiritual laughter.**

**When I consider the actual nature of compunction, I am amazed at how that which is called mourning and grief should contain joy and gladness within it, like honey in the comb. (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7)**

"So do not make a passion the remedy against passion," says Saint Nilus of Sinai, "lest you anger . . . Him who granted you this blessing (of mourning and tears). For in shedding tears for their sins many people forget the purpose of tears, and getting into a frenzy, they go astray." (Saint Nilus of Sinai, 5th c., *Texts of Prayer*)

# Meekness

**"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."**  
(Matthew 5:5) Meekness is an essential possession of the spiritual person. Jesus Himself was meek.

All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.  
(Matthew 11:27-30)

The apostles of Christ taught meekness. Saint Paul mentions it in all his writings and Saint James insists upon it.

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits . . . (James 3:13-17)

To be meek means to be gentle and kind, to be empty of all selfishness and earthly ambition. It means, in a word, never to return evil for evil, but always in everything to overcome evil by good. (Cf. Romans 12:14-21)

Meekness means to distrust and reject every thought and action of external coercion and violence, which in any case can never produce fruitful, genuine and lasting results.

Meekness is to have the firm and calm conviction that the good is more powerful than evil, and that the good ultimately is always victorious.

To refer once more to Saint John Climacus:

Meekness is an unchangeable state of mind which remains the same in honor and dishonor. Meekness is the rock overlooking the sea of irritability which breaks all the waves that dash against it, remaining itself unmoved. Meekness is the buttress of patience, the mother of love and the foundation of wisdom, for it is said, "The Lord will teach the meek His way." (Psalm 24:9) It prepares the forgiveness of sins; it is boldness in prayer, an abode of the Holy Spirit. "But to whom shall I look," says the Lord, "to him who is meek and quiet and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2) In meek hearts the Lord finds rest, but a turbulent soul is the seat of the devil. (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 24)